PACKET-TRACER /ASPIRE

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As I work in the field of assessment, my interest is in exploring the use of augmented reality and simulations for the purposes of evaluation rather than teaching. As a result, I chose to research and summarize a program I recently heard about at a conference I attended a few months ago. The program is called Packet-Tracer/Aspire and was developed by Cisco to help train and assess their computer network technicians for purposes of certification.

Packet-Tracer is the software program that was developed and Aspire is the next generation of the program that basically takes the underlying software of Packet-Tracer and overlays a game type of environment overtop of it. Cisco describes Aspire as a “ strategic simulation and quest game for building networks and developing information and communications technology (ICT) and entrepreneurship skills”. Aspire places the student in a virtual city environment where they are a network technician working for themselves and they receive requests from other characters in the city asking them for technical help. For example, the local coffee shop owner asks for help setting up their new computer/cash register system. It looks very similar to the game Sims so on the surface, it looks like a game but underlying all that, the program is developing and testing very specific computer and entrepreneurial skills. As a result, I believe it is a great tool for both teaching and assessment as it keeps students engaged and challenged by both being realistic to the real world and fun while keeping the focus on the development of the key skills and knowledge.

It’s difficult to summarize this program in such a short amount of words but I did find this youtube video that full explains the program for those who are interested in learning more.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2njUqmu9v5s>